

Introduction

The Mental Health Ombuds Service of King County is provided by Interchange Northwest, LLC through a contract with the King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD).

We provide support for people that are having difficulties with their mental health services or are having difficulty getting mental health services. We also provide information and referral services to all people in King County.

This is the report of Mental Health Ombuds Service activities from April 2008 through September 2008. This report provides information regarding program management, advocacy, outreach and education, other activities, and next steps.

Program Management

Staffing

The three ombuds staff provided a total of 1,501 hours of service, or an average of about 250 hours per month or 1.6 full time equivalent (FTE) positions, during this reporting period. This is slightly more (two percent) than the previous six-month period (1,477 hours).

Month	Hours of Service
April	256
May	260
June	267
July	248
August	240
September	230
Total	1,501

Publications

We updated our brochures to reflect new office location and expanded the number of languages to include the eight "preferred" languages used in King County public education materials. In addition to English, those languages are Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodia, Laotian, Russian, and Somali. We are working with King County to post these documents on the mental health ombuds web site.

Advocacy

We had 980 contacts, by phone or in person, during this report period, nearly 163 contacts each month. This is a seventeen percent increase over the previous six-month period (837 contacts). The following summarizes hours of service and number of contacts by month. Contacts include people requesting information about accessing mental health and other community services, allied providers, and other individuals and groups who are interested in community mental health services. Many of these people are satisfied with the information and ask for no additional support.

Month	Contacts
October	217
November	177
December	160
January	147
February	122
March	157
Total	980

In September 2007, we began monitoring the number of people that visited our website, www.kingcounty.gov/dchs/mhd/ombuds1.html. We had 885 "hits" during the first five months. This is greater than the 872 visits to the website during the previous six month period. In September, we lost the ability to track visits to the web site. We are working with the County to reestablish this function and have been told that it may be available in the next two months.

We received a signed release of information to support 22 people during this reporting period. This is about 47% more than the number of situations during the prior period (15). This increase is consistent with an increase in the same reporting period from one year ago. This and monthly data may suggest that there is a seasonal increase in this reporting period, specifically during the spring months. The following summarizes the complaints by type opened during the current reporting period (April 2008 through September 2008) and the prior reporting period (October 2007 through March 2008).

Cases Opened	10/07 – 3/08		4/08 – 9/08	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Quality/Appropriateness	3	20.0%	5	22.7
Access	3	20.0	8	36.4
Financial/Admin	3	20.0	2	9.1
Dignity & Respect	2	13.0	1	4.5
Physician/Medical	2	13.0	4	18.2
Housing	1	7.0	2	
Consumer Rights	1	7.0	-	
Total	15	100.0%	22	100.0%

Twenty-six situations were resolved in the current period, about 13% more than the prior period (23). The following summarizes the cases closed by type of resolution.

Cases Closed	10/07 – 3/08		4/08 – 9/08	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Mediation/Conciliation	13	68.4%	19	73.1%
Information/Referral	4	21.1	2	7.7
Not Pursued	2	10.5	3	11.5
Grievance	-	-	2	7.7
Total	19	100.0%	26	100.0%

We assisted in two grievances during the period. There were two situations that remained unresolved as of the end of this reporting period.

Access by Groups

The following summarizes data regarding access to special populations during this reporting period.

During this period, 52% of the people seeking support were women and 48% were men. Ninety-six percent of the people were enrolled in Medicaid.

Four percent of the people reported having a chemical dependency, significantly less than the two prior reporting periods (22% and 26% respectively). Two of the people during this period identified themselves as a gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or trans-gendered person. None of the people reported having a developmental disability.

The following summarizes the people we supported during this period by their reported ethnicity.

Caucasian	52.0%
African-American	16.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	8.0
Hispanic	-
Native American	-
Unknown	24.0%

Consumer Feedback On Satisfaction with Ombuds Services

During this reporting period we attempted to contacted 19 people about thirty days after their situation had been resolved to determine whether they were still satisfied with the outcome, to rule out retaliation and ask them about their satisfaction with ombuds services.

We were able to communicate with 11 of those 19 people. None of them reported retaliation. Ten of them reported being satisfied with the outcome and the support they received from the Mental Health Ombuds Services. One of them reported that they were not satisfied with the outcome stating that the ombuds service "...didn't do much", expecting that the ombuds service would more directly determine the outcome of their issue.

Outreach and Education

We distributed the semi-annual Ombuds Services Report covering activities through the six-month period ending March, 2008.

We met with the Program Manager and staff for the King County Community Corrections Division. We discussed mental health issues for people we both support.

We participated in a phone conference with other ombuds throughout the state to discuss the agenda for the next meeting with the Mental Health Division Director in Olympia. We subsequently met with the Director with other ombuds and Quality Review Teams (QRT) participants throughout the state. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate a dialogue with the Director and his staff and exchange information about how he sees ombuds services and QRTS fitting into the mental health system.

We attended a community lunch and spoke with YMCA senior volunteers about aging and mental health.

Other Activities

We attended the following monthly meetings during this reporting period:

- Five Mental Health Advisory Board meetings
- Three King County Partners meetings
- Four Clinical Directors meetings

We attended the semi-annual statewide meeting of Ombuds and Quality Review Team members from across the state sponsored by the Washington Institute for Mental Illness Research and Training (WMIRT).

We participated in several meetings with stakeholders interested in implementing a consumer operated "warm line" in King County. A warm line is a form of support that people use to connect with a person when they need someone to talk to.

Next Steps

The Mental Health Ombuds Service of King County will continue to provide support for people enrolled in the public mental health service system that are having difficulty with their services, or having a difficult time enrolling for services. We will focus on assisting people to resolve their disputes at the lowest level possible. We will continue to work to provide the highest quality ombuds services and advocate for all of the people in King County experiencing mental illness and their families.

During the next twelve months, we will continue to visit each one of the community mental health providers and speak with staff about ombuds services, client rights, and conflict resolution.

We will continue to improve our web presence to expand our outreach efforts and means by which people can connect with us for information, referral and advocacy. We will expand our site to enable staff and people we support to download and print copies of our mental health ombuds services brochures in each of the preferred languages.

We will continue to collect additional clarifying information from individuals who report being unsatisfied with the outcome of their issues and the support they received from the mental health ombuds office. We now include this additional information in our monthly and semi-annual reports.

We will continue to advocate for the transformation of the system of mental health support in King County toward recovery and self-determination.